

VZCZCXRO0970
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHMRE RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHMO #5375 1391423
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 191423Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6186
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHXL/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNOSC/OSCE POST COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI PRIORITY 3752
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 6718
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 005375

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [OSCE](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: LETTER FROM U/S BURNS TO DFM KARASIN ON SOUTH
OSSETIA

REF: STATE 80906

Classified By: Minister Counselor for Political Affairs Kirk Augustine.
Reason 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) PolMinCouns delivered reftel letter May 19 to MFA IV CIS Director Andrey Kelin. Kelin said he would immediately pass the letter to DFM Karasin and DFM Kislyak. The latter needed to see it because, Kelin said, the letter makes an "overstatement" in asserting that "the G8 has decided to include" discussion of Belarus and frozen conflicts on the agenda for the G8 Ministerial. "There has been no G8 decision on this," he said flatly. PolMinCouns questioned him closely on the issue, saying that the U.S. believed it was clear such a decision had been taken at the April G8 Political Directors Meeting in Moscow. Kelin stuck to his denial, saying that the agreement had been only to put Nagorno-Karabakh on the agenda, and only if there was progress when the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents meet on June 5. He added that letters from the various G8 members did not support the U.S. position. (Note: Kelin acknowledged that he is not responsible for G8 issues and cannot speak authoritatively for the GOR on them. He expected, however, that Kislyak would be "very surprised" by the U.S. assertion. End Note.)

¶2. (C) On South Ossetia, Kelin said he was "surprised" and "disappointed" at the "one-sided" position of the U.S. The letter indicated, he said, that the U.S. had "taken sides" with Georgia against Russia. He found it "strange" that the letter makes no mention of the recent JCC in Tskhinvali and its achievements, which he enumerated and emphasized. Since the letter mentioned similar U.S. concerns on Abkhazia, he also found it strange that there was no mention of the "breakthrough" meeting of the Coordinating Commission in Sukhumi May 18. PolMinCouns said the U.S. was well-informed about both meetings.

¶3. (C) Kelin largely dismissed the letter's charges on Russian activities in South Ossetia as a "compilation of press statements from the Georgian MFA," and disputed their accuracy. Initially, he said he would not comment on the charge that Russian officials have posts in the "government" of South Ossetia; that was "just a reproduction of the Georgian line." Later, he said none of the named "officials" concurrently hold Russian posts, although he did not dispute that they might be Russian citizens. He claimed the economic projects listed in the letter were decided in a public meeting of the North and South Ossetian governments in March, who have "every right" to engage in such cooperation, which was "no secret." PolMinCouns noted that at that very meeting an assistant to Russian PM Fradkov had said he looked forward

to the unification of North and South Ossetia in Russia. Kelin replied that the official had "apologized profusely" for his "imprudent statements," and that Russia had no intention of incorporating South Ossetia.

COMMENT

14. (C) Kelin's immediate reaction after a quick reading of the letter -- stressing that it was "one-sided," disputing the accuracy of some of its specifics, downplaying others, and ignoring the rest -- is not a definitive GOR response, which will come from Karasin (and perhaps Kislyak). We expect, however, that Kelin probably accurately foreshadowed the contours of what we will hear from higher GOR levels.

BURNS